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Canada and Christendom

CANADA AND CHRISTENDOM

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EDITORIAL

In this issue of Canada and Christendom we conclude two articles begun in the last issue, "The Priest as Teacher", and "Christianity in an Industrial Society". The first is by an American priest, the latter by a Canadian whose sixteen years in the Sacred Ministry have been spent in England. Though not written in Canada, they deal with problems, circumstances or conditions found in Canada. The course of action which each writer points to is as necessary in Canada as it is in the writers' own countries.

The problem considered by each writer is essentially the same, overcoming ignorance in and out of the Church about Jesus Christ and what He means. The article from England is concerned with the Church's lack of contact with the mass of the people in an industrial society. The author speaks of what is being done to restore contact, which must be followed by teaching these people the way of Jesus Christ.

In this country the Church has lost contact with many in our industrial sections (though we do not like to admit it); we are out of touch with many ub our agricultural, mining, and other sparsely populated areas, which generally lack adequate, and often lack any means of regular, systematic church teaching.

Even where the regular ministrations of the Church have been carried on over the years we too often find a sadly uninformed laity. It is not enough that the church carry on, with good congregations, smooth running organizations, sound finances. The Church must be the place where growth in Jesus Christ takes place. It is necessary antecendent to the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ that men and women should see and learn of Christ, yet the clergy have been described as "too busy answering the questions no one is asking". We need "Evangelism" as a long range project. We trust that the articles we conclude in this issue will be of some practical help in the promotion of Christendom in Canada. A concentrated programme of evangelism has been promoted for 1956, and this must involve teaching those who now belong to the Church, as well as those untouched by the Church. No matter where, when, or how fast one is converted to Christianity, that is only the beginning; the next stage goes on throughout life on earth, learning. For Christ's Church to be always learning it must be taught. And for Christs" Church to have growth in its new knowledge, it must be led.

Rev. H.I.G. Ragg.

THE PRIEST AS TEACHER
(Part 2)

One of the remaining teaching opportunities for the priest is that of his actual preaching. There are, of course, many ways in which a priest exercises his teaching office - - in the confessional, in pastoral work and counselling, in confirmation and marital instruction; and so on. But it is especially by the sermon that he is required to teach. He may not reach many members of the congregation in other connections; but at least they have to listen to him preaching. Here is a regular and magnificent opportunity to expound the faith. And yet how often we misuse it! Sunday after Sunday our clergy preach; but how little of it is real teaching, and how much of it is a strange compound of exhortation, moralism and apt or inept illustration!

If we keep firmly in mind that the sermon can be, and should be, our occasion for teaching, not only will we do our congregation a service, but we can meet a fear which besets many, perhaps all of us, when we graduate and take Holy Orders. Often we fall into a panic, wondering how we shall find material enough to preach twice a Sunday for the rest of our lives -- not to mention material for the many occasions when we shall be asked to "say a few words". How can the scanty knowledge we have acquired in three years' theological study suffice for such an endless task -- especially in view of the fact we have already forgotten a great part of it, while another part of it is rather unsuitable for sermons? We can meet this panic easily enough if we realize that the need of the congregation is for quite simple Christian teaching. We shall not be inspired by great ideas every Sunday. Inspiration is likely to come once a year, if that; and often it is not as profitable for others as it seems to us at the moment. But if we shall not be always inspired since most of us are rather prosaic people anyway, we can always teach. We can always expound some part of the Church's faith, showing its relevance to our immediate situation. And here I should like to say that we should never be afraid of repitition. Propaganda is based on repetition; and if what you are teaching is true, it can certainly stand as much repetition as modern advertising thrives upon. All good teaching is based on this. One has to go over a thing many times before one really grasps it. Hence I think the fear many priests have that, because they preached on such and such a topic last year, they should avoid it this year, is quite ungrounded. If congregations are like theological students (and I suspect they are), they are likely to understand nothing till they have heard it at least three times, and often even more.

Then we need balance in our preaching, and for this the observance of the Church Year most obviously supplies. All the great mysteries of the faith are celebrated from Advent to Trinity; and liturgical preaching which follows the lectionary and the propers is altogether commendable. Many priests have no order at all in their preaching, and tend to favour the few themes which particularly appeal to them. The Church Year can quickly undo such narrowness.

It makes us balanced and expansive. It forces us to consider mysteries we might prefer to neglect, but which are all the more full of hidden surprises and glory because we would at first avoid them.

And how much there is to preach about, when one realizes the riches of the liturgy and the prevalent ignorance of the Faith! Take the psalms. What do these mean to an average congregation chanting them? Often they appear remote and mysterious, and the priest does nothing to elucidate them Yet when read, as they should be, from a Christian standpoint, how revealing they turn out to be! How well they capture the complaint of the heart: how well they break into a paeon of joy! But they only make sense when we realize we are the Israelites, and that Abraham, Jacob and patriarchs are part of our tradition and of our very selves. The meaning of a psalm is not always easy to arrive at. It takes Biblical study and symbolic study to reveal it. But then it does shine forth, as the truth of that catacomb picture of Peter and the rock, it is a thrilling experience to grasp it and to sing it. And what of the unseen hosts of wickedness and the "enemies" which are the burden of so many psalms? Those are our experiences, if we could only lift the veil from our eyes.

I recall that a priest once told me he found no sense in the Psalms we have in our Visitation for the Sick. But as one who used these devotions over a long period, I find it difficult to discover anything better or more appropriate. Take Psalm 71, which is your Visitations; "Deliver me, O Lord, out of the hand of the ungodly". Who, that has lain in hospital, does not know what that means when he is dealing with (or rather being dealt with by) purely secular medicine? Or again, "I am become as it were a monster unto many: but my sure trust is in thee". How could it be better put? The sick man feels he is a "monster" - - inactive, unproductive and often unlovely. Those pslams open the heart: they give voice to the deep complaint we dare hardly utter as our own, but which the Psalmist is unashamed to utter; and they lead us on to that trust which overcomes confusion, but which we cannot find alone, but only find through the strong experience of another.

And so we might go on, not only about the Psalms and canticles, the collects and lections, but about the whole round of our worship. What does an altar mean? Why does it have this place and shape? What of the candles, vestments, crosses and so on? Then there is the whole breadth of the Christians tradition, and our own particular tradition, about which our congregations yearn to hear more. The procession of Saints and thinkers in the Church: the great awakenings through the holy Spirit in days of drought and weariness -- the tale could go on forever. If we planned Sunday after Sunday to instruct our people in what they are doing on that particular occasion; and to use the resources of Bible, Liturgy, Church History, Theology, Apologetics, to make the Gospel more living and intelligible to them, we should at last achieve an educated laity. We do not have to be geniuses to do this-- just simple, sincere, inquiring priests. Too long has it been supposed that one must wait for some

kind of inspiration for a sermon, for some neat phrase or turn of thought. The Church was not built on such tracery. It was built on rock, which is more mundane and solid thing. And so I suggest our preaching whould not try to scale heights, or to titillate the audience with its brilliance or originality. We have tried that all too long, and shown that it is not effectual. But let a sermon have solid, simple content, which will inform the mind and proclaim the truth of the Gospel, and it will work great things.

There are three areas in particular where I think we should strive to give better instruction. One is on prayer. We exhort our congregations to pray; but do we ever teach them exactly how to about it? On the whole I should say it is the rare Christian who gets beyond the few things he learned from his childhood about this. Has he considered, first, the question of posture? Prayer is not something only for the mind. We pray with our whole being. We pray with our body. Whether to stand, to lie, to sit, to kneel, and when to do the one ot the other, are important questions. For the body will aid the soul in prayer. Again take the use of imagination. "Picture" prayers are often more impelling than verbal ones. In cases of resentment, to picture oneself forgiving another or accepting his forgiveness (which is often harder), has more power than merely expressing it in words. Then there is the need to center down, to relax the whole being before prayer. In general, you cannot rush into prayer unless in some crisis. You have to find your center; and it is a good practice to lie down for a few minutes first. And then the distinctively Christian element in prayer -- the conviction of praying in the Kingdom; of believing that you receive what you ask for. This is an aspect, of course, of realized eschatology, of the sense that in the victory of Christ the Kingdom is now present in the Church, though not yet fully revealed. So the Christian prayer is an affirming of the future as if it were already here (for it is, in a sense, already here). We live in the twilight between the world and the Kingdom; and hence Jesus says: "Whatsoever things you desire when you pray believe that you receive them and you will get them" (M.K. 11:24) Simple instruction along such lines -- many of you can do it far better that I - can bring our people to a deeper sense of prayer. We have left them too long uninstructed.

The second area concerns teaching people about themselves. In pastoral couselling it is always a startling revelation to see how little people know of their own being, how they are actually unaware of what they do and think and feel. They operate so largely on the superficial level of getting and spending, of reacting to patterns early established, and mostly in conventional patterns of their neighbours, that they hardly have a being of their own. They are fairly moral and upright to be sure, good church-goers often, yet they do not "have themselves" as the Germans say (sich haben). The fleeting fancy they have never examined. They are not concious of sin, though they strive to do the right. Yet down in their depths they are dissatisfied with life, and after forty it often seems that there is little to live for; though they abide by their duty and accept this strange fate of inword emptiness.

How can we approach such people? The old symbols of sins and hell have no potency with them; they do not move them as they moved the eighteenth century. There is, however, one point in their armour which is weak. It is the point where we can meet them. They are anxious. They do not know why they are anxious ; they put it down to external circumstances. The sleepless night or the sudden panic for no apparent good reason come and go. But they are disturbed. Well, we can show them themselves. The sermon which tells about the person who is afraid of knives, or great heights, or who is over-anxious about locking the door, is not purely psychological sermon. It has an amazing directness to modern man and can lead to conversion. It talks about his symbols. And so it can penetrate beneath them, and disclose our naked being. Then it is that a man may understand about sin and salvation in a deep way, where previously he had thought them matters of external morals. He may see himself and he may find himself, because the preacher know what is in man and is talking about things that many are afraid to utter for themselves. Between the symbols of modern and the Biblical symbols there is often a great rift. It is our task to bridge this gulf; and we can only bridge it by showing we know what is in ourselves, for that is akin to what is in others. Too often we fail because having made the Biblical symbols our own through our special Christain upbringing or oor theological education, we do not realize that many in the congregation are estranged from their own being. First we must teach them who they are, then we can teach them who they may be.

I am afraid that my final illustration is a mournful one, though in a rather macabre way it makes a fitting conclusion to an address. For I want to speak of instruction on death. Of the thousands of sermons I have heard in my lifetime I cannot recall a single one on preparation for death. I am even more certain that I never heard one dealing specifically with funerals (though I have surely heard sermons at funerals). All of us will get sick and die. We can run away from this fear and fail to face it; but the event will will surely overcome us. As priests, therefore, it is our responsibility to teach not only holy living, but holy dying. Our age does not like to ponder death; though Esistentialism in France and Germany, however much we deplore its un-Christian character, has at least the courage to face this reality. Sartre and Heidegger, far from being afraid to reflect upon death, make decision about it fundamental to their systems. And so should the Christian though we have a more splendid, and in a sense an even more tragic, thing to say about it. But we have pushed it from us. The funeral parlour, which Evelyn Waugh has so devestatingly unmasked in his The Loved One -- the funeral parlour with its rose petals and scented silk and sentimental tears, has taken away the sting from death, and thereby robbed it of its true meaning and robbed us, too, of the Victory in Christ. But this is not the only thing. Many people either repress their grief (which is a Stoic idea, alien to (Christianity). We must mourn; but we must not be consumed by it. We should teach our people to let grief pierce the heart. The heart cannot

be healed unless it first allows itself to be pained. We must cry before our tears are turned to joy. But the deepest thing in the Christian funeral should surely be the joy. Well did the early Church understand this, when they followed the bier to the cemetary with palm branches and paeons of Alleluia. The day of death (espicially the martyr's death) was dies natalis. for Christ had conquered death. And so they wore white robes, as they had done at their baptism, to celebrated the joy of those who, by the victory of Christ, had inherited an eternal Kingdom.

This, then must suffice to illustrate my plea for more effective teaching when we preach. In the sermon we proclaim the Gospel. Yet the sermon can best be defined, as was once done by a colourful as well as a coloured preacher, who spoke of it as "explainifying with arousements". Perhaps in our tradition we are likely to be a little inhibited regarding the "arousements", but we should not be less eager for the sermon to be "explainifying". If our people learn from us, in a simple but inciseve way, what the Catholic faith is, what the Bible contains and means, and how to worship at home and in the Liturgy, they will be able to discharge those responsibilities the Church calls them to accept. In that way they will be true inheritors of Catholicism based on freedom, which neither demands servility nor exaggerates our claims to maturity. That is the distinctively Anglican way, by which we guard the ancient traditions while also affirming the liberty of the Gospel of Christ.

"MORALS AND MEDICINE."
A Book by Joseph Fletcher.
Published by Princton University Press.

Dr. Fletcher is an Anglican priest as well as professor of pastoral theology and Christian ethics at Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge Massachusetts. One of the best known of his other works is "Christianity and Property".

In this book therefore, we have a leading Anglican theologian coming to grips with problems of conscience for the most part raised by advances in the medical and social sciences. They arise as conscious issues at the start of the making of a life, in preserving its health, and in facing its death. These are the problems of all of us; and to these some new problems have been added such as artificial insemination, while at the same time old problems seen in new dimensions, such as euthanasia.

Modern Medicine provides such a high degree of control over health and the vital processes of life that men must shoulder the responsibility of intelligent decision as rationally as possible. This is why Dr. Fletcher's book is so welcome at this time -- it offers good leadership to the parish priest or layman who is concerned to meet the real needs of real people in the modern world. The book has the approach of beginning with the rights of men, and carefully defining one's right in relation to freedom, discipline and responsibility. It is within this framework that such problems as man's right to foreclose parenthood (sterilization) are carefully discussed. Many of the problems dealt with, and certainly much of the approach is useful to the parish leader who attempts to help people deal with the problems which tear their souls apart.

"Morals and Medicine" is a new and independent analysis of the morals of life and death, and strikes out along the line of the values of the personality rather than of the mere psychological life itself. It offers a modern and Christian concept of right and wrong for all who are involved: the patient, doctor and nurse, family and friends --- and the priest. The book is carefully annotated and so may serve as a basis for more thorough study.

This book is widely available at book stored, and incidently, we of "Canada and Christendom" recommend it.

E.D.B.

CHRISTIANITY IN AN INDUSTRIALISED SOCIETY

"MAKING CONTACT" (Part 2)

John R. G. Ragg, M.A., Social and Industrail Adviser to the Bishop of Bristol.

The object of the operation - to show to man in this day and generation that Christ still makes sense. As I finished up the first article by pointing out that preaching was not enough, so I must begin this second one with the pronouncement that in order to do this, to make contact, you have to be prepared to meet people where they are. To a certain extent it is an extention of the parochial pattern of house to house visiting - though in the homes one usually finds only Mum and the kids. Dad has gone off to work. Consequently it is essential to the strategyof this work that those doing it should be free to move about among people where they are - at work , in community activities, in their pubs and clubs. At the same time to remember that when you meet people where they are, this also means where they are in thought, word and deed, as well as in a physical sense. This does not mean I am advocating a specialist ministry - where the parish priest has industries , let him be know among them, and know about them! Remembering to be known by all, not a favoured few!

This then is what is being done in Sheffield, in Southwark, in Bristol, in Leicester, in Croydon, in Coventry, and in Birmingham. The Industrial situation varies, and the tactics to meet it vary, but the object is the same. The Bristol situation is this - a city of 500,000 people, with 1,100 types of industry being carried on in nearly 6,000 works. Our Industries range from Aircraft (The Bristol Aeroplane Company), Tobacco (The Imperial Tobacco Company and all its various off-shoots), Chocolate (Frys) , Docks, Railways, Zinc Smelting, down to the small two and three man unit. A variety situation that is full of interst , yet for the most part involving methods of production that prevents casual conversation with people while they work. In Sheffield, by way of contrast, where Steel is the major industry, the metal has to get hot and has to get cool, thus men have some time in which to sit about on their ham-bones and pass the time of day.

Our Bristol approach has therefore to be different. We have termed it the method of "personal contact". We spend a good deal of time "personally contacting" and getting to know the environment, the climate, the methods, the relationships, the people at work. We get to know people from the shop floor up, and people from the Director's Desk down, and all the people in between. Getting to know people personally is of course really only possible outside working hours - in their homes, in their pubs, in their clubs, in the Trade Union circles, and so on.

But there is a parallel phase to this operation - our contact with the

not nearly as powerful an ally to a man in a parish as a year or so spent in Industry working - but it does open the eyes and the understanding. Probably what is most important of all - the Course is run by Industry.

Each course runs for four days. Sometimes we are at the receiving end of lectures within Industry, sometimes we spend the time with men at work, sometimes we visit a works and then with the works - people we sit down and talk over the whole gamut of what we have seen. At all times the human factor predominates. We have been through the normal Induction Course any man entering the National Smelting Works would go through. We have worked at making chocolate with the people at Frys with no complaints from the consumer though our chaps reckoned that they had had a bit too much chocolate at the end of the day! Each year the Course is different , being designed to emphasis one particular aspect or problem. This year we are underlining the training for leadership within Industry.

Recognising the fact that the Churches have men and women at work in Industry and Commerce, but that for the most part they are submerged, we have taken steps to discover why. In the greater proportion of the instances it lies in the fact that they are ignorant of the demands made upon a person who calls himself a Christian. Far too many see it only as going to church on a Sunday or in terms of belonging to one or more of the Church oragnisations , or of pushing a plate. Seldom, if ever, is being a Christian seen as a full-seven-day-a-week activity. When one succeeds in convincing a chap that "pew-squatting" is not enough, then you are faced with a vacuum and the question: "What is the Christian Faith? It soon became apparent that the Churches have been at fault in their teaching. These chaps are good men, but their religious and spiritual life is warped, they never got beyond the David and Goliath stage. Also we find a stress on teaching the ritual and the ceremonial so that a chap knows what to do in church - not much help to him outside! So in Bristol we have experimented over the last little while with a Laity Training School: we began to sort out "What is the Christian Faith?", and how we are getting down to the question of relating this Faith to work and to community - and by that we are certain we do not mean no smoking , no drinking, no dancing, no going out with girls! We mean the actual facing up to the problems , the decisions of every day life in the terms of our knowledge and our understanding of Christ and Christianity. This is more than a vague interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, it is the active participation within the worshipping community in knowledge that has got to be translated into fact in the community of work, society, and leisure.

Almost since the beginning we have had a group of men drawn from different levels and from all sides of Industrial and Commercial life - and we include a parson or two and a Professor of Economics! This group meets once a month under the leadership of the Bishop, but remains always unofficial it has no agenda, and it has no minutes; it is consultative. The fact that it

meets each month rain, snow, and fog, and that members rush back from the far corners of the earth to take part- one member spends his life commuting between Bristol and Montreal does I think indicate sufficient evidence as to its worth. It is a group that thinks, and its thinking has strange repercussions! Basically it is the Church coming to grips with the major issues. In a number of parishes this group has been duplicated for much the same purpose - and parsons find themselves now answering questions people are asking, instead of a whole series of questions no one would ever ask, as they are unconnected with reality.

An important development has taken place recently in our relations with with the free Churches. From the start we have been in informal communications: now the relationship is formal, and the Free Churches are supporting the work of the Social and Industrial Adviser to the Bishop of Bristol, taking their lead from him. This has the result of a sense of unity in our approach, which is all to the good when seeking to enter industrial undertakings: quite naturally they want to know who you represent, and they don't want to be bothered by too many representatives!

Behind this localised effort lies the work of William Temple College, newly established at Rugby. Here Industry, Commerce, Professional men, Educationalists, Bishops and Clergy get together to sort things out, sometimes together as a group, sometimes seperately. The College has a small full-time staff with a number of top-level visiting lecturers. It has also a full -time course going on all the time, alongside short courses and residential conferences thus the College is becoming the "thinking box" behind this work of relating Christianity to the practical issues of the day. The worth of the College cannot be set down in one paragraph, nor can the content of its work be truly portrayed therefore if any reader would like fuller information he has but to ask me for it. One last word - the whole plan and function of the College is to extend and to bring to fruition the ideals, the plans, and the mind of that very great man whose name it bears.

Postscript. On reading back I find that in spite of the length I have not really fulfilled the task I was set - I have not given you more than gristle to the bones! May I therefore put my conclusion this way - as a challenge? I am a Canadian. I have lived for nearly 20 years in the U. K., visiting Canada in 1937 and again in 1953, but always in touch with Canadian affairs. I expected to see the result of great developments when I visited Canada two years ago: naturally I was staggered. But I came away with one concrete impression in my mind - Canadian Clergy and Churchmen concentrate almost their entire energy on saving the "saved" - the pew - squatter. What of the lost sheep? What of the vast new areas being opened up? To put it quite clearly - the Church in the U. K. got caught short by concentrating in this manner, and the Church in Canada may also find that her strength is that of a dying people. Clergy must endeavour to relate the faith to Total Life, not

the limited and narrow feature that is Church. Work, Community, Society, Education, Drains, etc., concern Christ very much more than pews, bells, sidesmen, parsons, elaborate decoration and ceremonial!

EDITORS" NOTES

We are very grateful to Dr. Cyril C. Richardson of Union Theological Seminary, who has kindly allowed his article "The Priest as Teacher" to be published at this time. This article was originally delivered at the Trinity College Convocation an April 28th, 1952. Part one of this article was published in the last issue of "Canada and Christendom".

We also appreciate the efforts made by the Rev. John R. G. Ragg to produce for our readers some creative thought regarding the task of the Church in an industrial society. We are happy to print the last in a series of two articles on this vital subject.